

Educational and Marketing Materials

1. Recess Before Lunch tri-fold brochure

A camera-ready brochure to educate communities/schools on the benefits of Recess Before Lunch. A full color version is available on the Montana OPI Web site www.opi.state.mt.us/schoolfood/index.html

2. Recess Before Lunch PowerPoint Presentation

A handout listing the power point slides is enclosed. Please contact Montana Team Nutrition for an electronic version of the presentation.

3. Recess Before Lunch Overhead Transparencies

Ready to use overhead transparencies to promote Recess Before Lunch.

4. Recess Before Lunch Handout

A ready to use handout which helps explain this policy and provides tips on getting started.

5. Example of Letter to Parents

A brief letter to parents explaining the rationale behind Recess Before Lunch.

6. "Making Mealtime Pleasant"

An article geared to school staff, school food service, parents, and community explaining the benefits associated with implementation of a Recess Before Lunch policy.

7. "Reverse Order"

An article from School Foodservice & Nutrition.

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8. Recess Before Lunch Press Releases

Examples of press releases to use in the promotion of Recess Before Lunch.



Powerpoint Presentation

The following Power Point slides are available from Montana Team Nutrition.

RECESS BEFORE LUNCH



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What is Recess Before Lunch?

Kids Play,
And Then
Eat!



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Why do it?

- Teachers note that the kids are more settled upon returning to the classroom after lunch, and ready to start afternoon classes.

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Why do it?

- Principals and teachers also note decreased behavioral problems on the playground, in the lunchroom and in the halls.

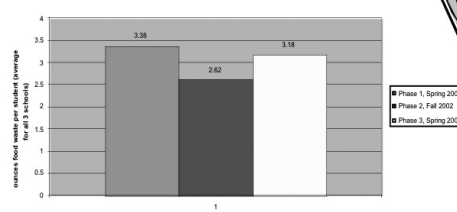
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Why do it?

- Plate waste studies have shown that the children waste less food and drink more milk. The decrease in food and milk waste has been dramatic in some cases.

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Figure 1: Average Food Waste per Student Decreases

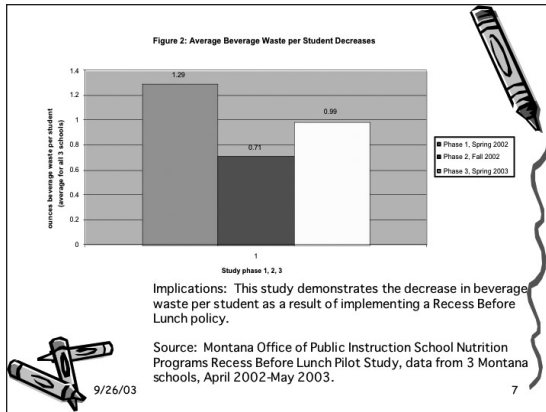


Study Phase	Average Food Waste per Student (pounds per all 3 school days)
Phase 1, Spring 2002	3.38
Phase 2, Fall 2002	2.62
Phase 3, Spring 2003	3.18

Implications: This study demonstrates the decrease in food waste per student as a result of implementing a Recess Before Lunch policy.

Source: Montana Office of Public Instruction School Nutrition Programs Recess Before Lunch Pilot Study, data from 3 Montana schools, April 2002-May 2003.

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Why do it?

- The atmosphere in the lunchroom is more conducive to eating and is much more relaxed, as the kids are not rushing through lunch to get outside.

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Quotes from MT Schools

Whitefish Central School, Whitefish, Montana-
Mr. Kim Anderson, Principal

"Benefits that we have seen at Whitefish Central are:

- Less conflict on the playground and in the lunchroom
- Improved behavior in afternoon classes
- Students are eating better and wasting less food"
- "My 5th period teachers love it!"

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Quotes from MT Schools

Teachers support the change to RBL for the following reasons:

- "Children are settled down and ready to learn when they return to the classroom."
- "Less fights on the playground and better classroom behavior."

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Quotes from MT schools

Students report:

- "If you eat lunch before recess, you get a tummy ache."
- "It takes off all your energy, so you're not moving around at lunch."

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How to start a RBL Policy

- Build support within your school and community.
 - Within the School
 - Educate the Parents
 - Within the Community
 - Educate the Students

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How to start a RBL Policy

- Plan the new recess and lunch schedule.
- Include a hand washing plan in the lunch schedule.
- Allow adequate time for the children to eat lunch.
- Increase the presence of school staff in the lunchroom initially.



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Practical Tips

- Scheduling tends to be the biggest hurdle to overcome. Expect the schedule to be a work in progress.
- Get teachers' input and "buy-in" from the start.
- Younger kids (K-2) tend to "accept" the change in scheduling better than the older kids do initially.



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Practical Tips

- Decide where to store cold lunches for easy access.
- Some schools opt to take care of lunch money prior to recess.
- Kids are likely to be hungrier with this change. Schools may opt to offer a mid-morning snack, along with promotion of the school's breakfast program.



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A Recess Before Lunch Implementation Guide

is available from the Montana Team Nutrition Program

Or, access the guide online at:

www.opi.state.mt.us/schoolfood/index.html



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Contact Information

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In summary, Recess Before Lunch:

- Helps students eat better
- Helps students behave better
- Benefits teachers and school staff
- All of which lead to healthier families, schools and communities!



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Recess Before Lunch

Expected Benefits of the Recess Before Lunch Policy

- ★ **Fewer classroom discipline problems.** Children are more settled when they return to class after eating.
- ★ **Better classroom performance.** Children pay more attention to the lessons when they are not hungry.
- ★ **Better cafeteria behavior.** Children are ready to eat and not eager to leave lunch to go out and play.
- ★ **Greater nutrient consumption.** Children are ready to eat, and they eat more of the foods.
- ★ **Improved cafeteria atmosphere.** Students spend time eating and visiting, not rushing to get outside.

Recess Before Lunch

Montana Schools Are Reaping the Benefits of a Recess Before Lunch Policy

- ★ The teachers feel that the kids are more settled and ready to start afternoon classes. Principals and teachers also note improved behavior on the playground, in the lunchroom and in the halls.
- ★ Kids eat better! Plate waste studies have shown that the children do eat better (waste less food) and drink more milk. The decrease in food and milk waste has been **dramatic** in some cases.
 - ✓ Paxson School, Missoula, MT, food waste (garbage cans dropped from 12 to 3!)
- ★ The atmosphere in the lunchroom is more conducive to eating and is much more relaxed, as the kids are not rushing through lunch to get outside. The kids are actually **eating**. Most schools allow 25-30 minutes to eat.

Recess Before Lunch

Steps to Implementing a Recess Before Lunch Policy

- ★ Build support within your school and community.
 - i. Within the School
 - ii. Educate the Parents
 - iii. Within the Community
 - iv. Educate the Students
- ★ Plan the new recess and lunch schedule.
- ★ Include a hand washing plan in the lunch schedule.
- ★ Allow adequate time for the children to eat lunch.
- ★ Increase the presence of school staff in the lunchroom initially.

Recess Before Lunch

Practical Tips and Advice from Montana Schools

- ★ Scheduling tends to be the biggest hurdle to overcome. It is do-able; it just takes some creative planning. Expect the schedule to be a work in progress. No extra staff has been required as a result of the change.
- ★ Montana administrators, who have been successful in implementing Recess Before Lunch policies, recommend looking past the logistics of the scheduling change and concentrating on what is best for the kids.
- ★ It's important to get teachers' input and "buy-in" from the start. Really promote the improvement in kid's behavior on the playground and in the classroom, as well as more teaching time in the morning.
- ★ Food service staff from all of the schools has provided positive feedback and reported no problems from their end.

Recess Before Lunch

Practical Tips and Advice from Montana Schools

- ★ Younger kids (K-2) tend to “accept” the change in scheduling better than the older kids initially. Focus groups with Montana students have shown that the younger kids “perceive” the change in a more positive way.
- ★ Decide where to store cold lunches and lunch tickets/punch cards for easy access.
- ★ Some schools opt to take care of lunch money prior to recess. Others keep the accounting procedure the same. This has not been identified as a potential problem for scheduling in Montana schools.
- ★ Kids are likely to be hungrier with this change. Schools may opt to offer a mid-morning snack, along with promotion of the school’s breakfast program.



Steps to Implementing a Recess Before Lunch Policy

1. Build support within your school and community.

A. Within the School-Educate yourself and your staff, *including teachers, aides, secretaries, food service, staff, janitors, etc.* It is beneficial to visit firsthand, or at least make contact, with another school administrator that has successfully implemented Recess Before Lunch at his/her school. Educate staff on this policy through a school staff meeting. Make a commitment to stick with it and ride out the first couple of months. School food service staff should be involved from the beginning, as they are key players in accommodating the change. Be ready for some resistance to change and small problems that arise. Keep the benefits in mind-enhanced nutrition, which supports improved behavior and learning.

B. Educate the Parents-Place a RBL article in the parent newsletter or send a letter to parents. Sprinkle RBL information/benefits/tips into the monthly school lunch menu that is provided to parents.

C. Within the Community-Share the benefits/concept of RBL at a Parent Advisory Council Meeting, school board meeting, or run an article in the local and school newspaper.

D. Educate the Students-Educate the students so that they understand the policy and schedule change.

2. Plan the new recess and lunch schedule. Meet with *all of the staff* involved, especially those directly affected by the schedule change (teachers, janitors, aides, food service) to work out the kinks. Realize that the schedule is a work in progress which may need to be revised several times. Many schools conduct a trial run for several weeks to identify scheduling issues, and then modify it as needed.

3. Include a hand washing plan in the lunch schedule. Hand washing is an important food safety issue that should not be overlooked. Most school schedules are written so that the children come in from recess, put coats away, wash hands, and then enter the lunchroom as a group. Other schools send children directly to the lunchroom from the playground, and provide them a disposable handy wipe or provide access to an instant sanitizer dispenser to cleanse their hands before eating.

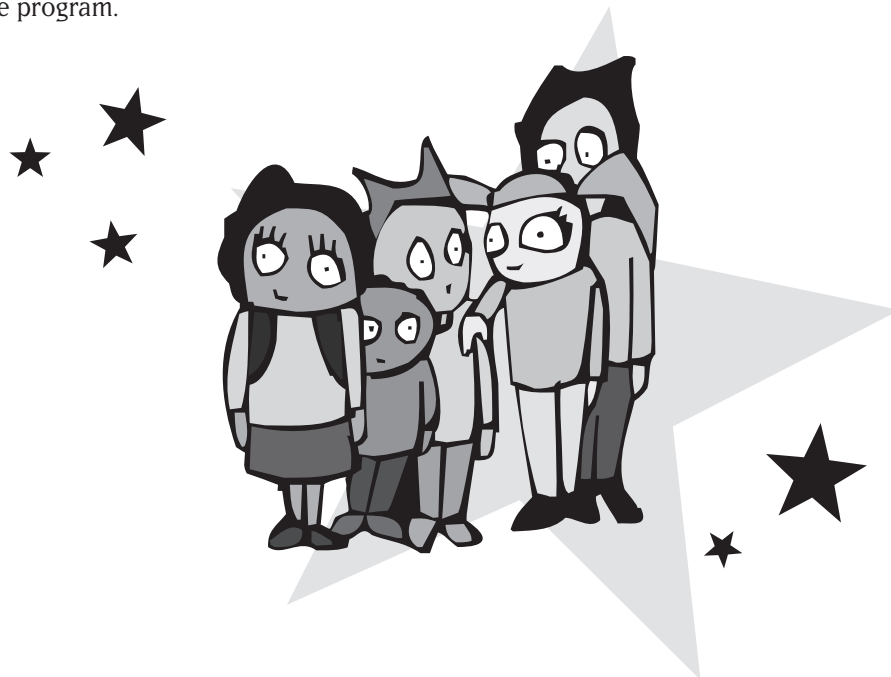
4. Allow adequate time for the children to eat lunch. It is recommended that children have at least 20 minutes from the time they sit down with their tray. Most Montana schools allow 25-30 minutes for the lunch period. Keep in mind that the younger students require more time to get through the serving line and to eat. Students must also adapt to being in the cafeteria for 20+ minutes. Many schools find it helpful to use the score clock, if available, to count down the minutes until the students are released back to their classrooms. This helps students gauge how much time they have left. Practice this change with the kids. Initially, the noise in the lunchroom may increase as the students learn to make this behavior change. Over time, schools have noticed an improved atmosphere in the cafeteria as children relearn to eat slowly, relax, and socialize more during lunch.

5. Increase the presence of school staff in the lunchroom initially. Principals and other school staff should spend as much time as possible in the lunchroom, especially during the first couple of weeks, to practice this new routine with the students. This helps ease the transition into and out of the lunchroom and allows extra supervision as the students learn a new routine. This exemplifies staff support of the RBL policy and the school lunch program, while enhancing the atmosphere of the lunch period.



Practical Tips and Advice from Montana Schools with Recess Before Lunch Policies

- ★ **Scheduling tends to be the biggest hurdle to overcome.** It is do-able; it just takes some creative planning and flexibility. Expect the schedule to be a work in progress. No extra staff has been required as a result of the change. See examples of schedules from MT schools included in this guide for ideas.
- ★ Montana administrators, who have been successful in implementing RBL policies, recommend **looking past the logistics of the scheduling change and concentrating on what is best for the kids.**
- ★ **It's important to get teachers' input and "buy-in" from the start.** Really promote the improvement in children's behavior on the playground and in the classroom, as well as more teaching time in the morning.
- ★ **Younger kids (K-2) tend to "accept" the change in scheduling better than the older kids initially.** Focus groups with Montana students have shown that the younger kids "perceive" the change in a more positive way.
- ★ **Feedback from food service staff from all of the schools has been positive** with no problems reported from their end.
- ★ **Decide where to store cold lunches and lunch tickets/punch cards for easy access.**
- ★ **Some schools opt to take care of lunch money prior to recess.** Others keep the accounting procedure the same. This has not been identified as a potential problem area.
- ★ **Kids are likely to be hungrier and thirstier with this change.** Schools may opt to offer a mid-morning snack, along with promotion of the school's breakfast program. Schools are having dispensers of ice water available in the cafeteria to quench thirst. Middle schools may also opt to sell bottled water as part of an ala carte program.



Highland Park Elementary

May 7, 2002

Dear Parents:

Beginning next week, Highland Park will be trying a new schedule during our lunch break: "Recess Before Lunch." Several Montana schools have already implemented this type of lunch hour, and others will also be trying a new schedule for the next year. Before eating lunch, our students will be dismissed to the playground for play and then be brought in to eat. Following lunch, students will return to class, ready to learn. Students will have the same play time and will have a slightly longer time in the lunchroom for eating during the new schedule.

There are many benefits to this type of program. Schools report greater nutrient consumption, as children eat a more balanced diet; less plate waste or food thrown away, as children are more ready to eat and are not in a hurry to get outside to play; better classroom performance, as children pay more attention when they are not hungry; better lunchroom and classroom behaviors, as children are focused on lunch rather than the playground and return to class feeling more full and settled.

We hope that this new schedule will promote better nutrition and student achievement for all of our students. We will try this schedule for two weeks, and if successful, will implement it for the next school term. If you have any questions, please contact me.

Also, we have gathered quite a collection of Lost and Found items. Please feel free to stop at the front office to look for clothing or other articles that may belong to your children.

Thank you for supporting Highland Park. It's been a great year!

Sincerely,

Sharon Redfern,
Principal

Making Mealtime Pleasant and Decreasing Food Waste in School Lunch Programs

Would you like to improve the mealtime atmosphere at your school, while encouraging elementary students to eat better? Implementing a Recess Before Lunch Policy can help you do this! The Montana Team Nutrition Program is working with 4 Montana Schools that are piloting a Recess Before Lunch (RBL) Program. As the name implies, the students go to recess first and then eat lunch. Proposed benefits to the RBL program are: decreased food waste and better student behavior in the cafeteria and classroom.

I would like to share with you the preliminary findings from the schools. Feedback thus far has been overwhelmingly positive from principals, teachers, food service staff, and students. They report that the children are eating better (wasting less food). Plate waste studies have confirmed this. Even more impressive is the change in the cafeteria- it is so quiet! The kids are actually eating and visiting with each other, not in such a hurry to get outside for recess. The atmosphere is more relaxed and conducive to eating.

Teachers support the change to RBL for the following reasons:

- ★ Children are settled down and ready to learn when they return to the classroom.
- ★ Fewer fights on the playground and better classroom behavior.
- ★ Students are not rushing through lunch to get out to recess.
- ★ Students are hungrier when it's time for lunch, so they eat better.

Students report:

- ★ "It makes me more hungry and I like to eat."
- ★ "I can play soccer sooner; we get to play before we go to lunch."
- ★ "If you eat lunch before recess, you get a tummy ache."
- ★ "It takes off all your energy, so you're not moving around at lunch."

If you would like more information on how to start a Recess Before Lunch Policy, or if you'd like supporting information to share with your school administrator please contact Molly Stenberg with the Team Nutrition Program at 406-994-5641 or e-mail stenberg@montana.edu.

